President:
Bill Somerton
284-9785

Lafayette Historical Society
POST OFFICE BOX 133, LAFAYETTE, CA 94549

NEWSLETTER

Lafayette, California | January, 1999 | Vol. 26, No. 1

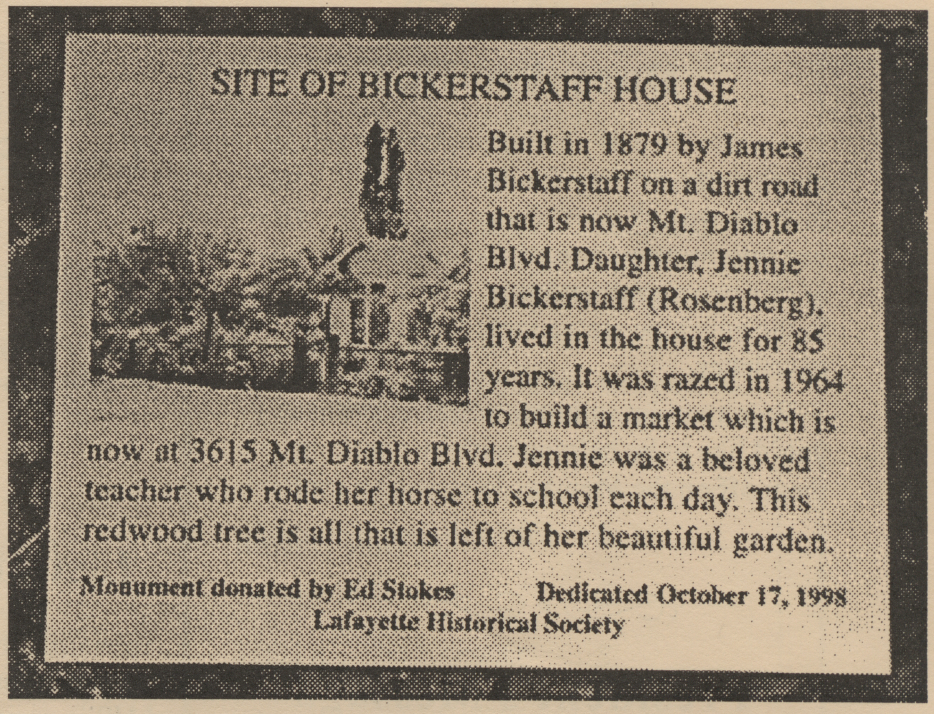
Miss Jennie's Tree Has its Plaque!

Margaret Jane (Miss Jennie) Bickerstaff was the best-known teacher in early Lafayette. Marion Volberg, with help and support from the Society, organized the dedication ceremony for a plaque marking the site of Mis Jennie's home, and that same redwood tree she planted in her garden in Lafayette. Marion also MC'd the ceremony, dressed in period attire and carrying Miss Jennie's own parasol. The ceremony was held under the redwood tree, which now has Diablo Foods as its neighbor instead of the Bickerstaff home.

The October 17th ceremony, the last outdoor event of our Sesquicentennial year, had a great advantage over the first event: it was held outdoors on a beautiful day. While the plaque dedication of Elam Brown's first home site on February 7th was plagued with lots of rain, Saturday the 17th of October provided lots of sunshine in Lafayette. And a goodly crowd did attend.

Carl Anderson, Associate Pastor of Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church, recounted the founding of that church in 1878 by, among others, James Bickerstaff, Miss Jennie's father. Church records show that Margaret became a member in 1883. She later helped start the first "daily vacation" Sunday school at the church in 1918. Mr. Anderson also delivered the invocation at this ceremony.

Next came the Presentation of the Colors by Girl Scout Troop 577, followed by Town Crier Redmond O'Colonies with his usual coverage of the news of the month frequently overlooked by the mainstream media. Gayle Uilkima, County Supervisor for our area, then remarked about the importance of keeping track of our history, and Mayor


SITE OF BICKERSTAFF HOUSE
Built in 1879 by James Bickerstaff on a dirt road that is now Mt. Diablo Blvd. Daughter, Jennie Bickerstaff (Rosenberg), lived in the house for 85 years. It was razed in 1964 to build a market which is now at 3615 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Jennie was a beloved teacher who rode her horse to school each day. This redwood tree is all that is left of her beautiful garden.
Monument donated by Ed Stokes
Dedicated October 17, 1998
Lafayette Historical Society

"We believe in the power of history to ignite the imagination, stimulate thought and provide enjoyment. Through our collections and programs we strive to link Lafayette's history to the lives of people."

Anne Grodin accepted the plaque on behalf of the people of Lafayette.

Elam Brown, portrayed by Ray Peters, described how Margaret Bickerstaff became known as "Jennie". According to Elam, her mother favored the name Margaret for her new baby, while her father favored Jane. Thus the baby was named Margaret Jane. Her father called her Jane, using his strong Irish brogue, and the result sounded like "Jennie" to non-Irish folks. But Miss Bickerstaff came to think of Jennie as her early childhood name, and later preferred Margaret.

Other speakers included LHS President Bill Somerton and Diablo Foods owner Ed Stokes. Accolades were accorded to: Ed Stokes for his contribution of the plaque, as well as some of the refreshments for the ceremony; Miler McGrath of Diamond K Supply for donating and placing the rock on which the plaque is mounted; and the Lafayette Garden Club and Lafayette Service League for providing refreshments.

—by Gary Willcuts

Dues Are Due

It's that time of year again, time to send a check to the Society for that amazingly small pittance we call dues. *Please cut out the Member Information form on the inside back cover of this newsletter*, and mail it with your check in the envelope we've included inside this newsletter.

Be sure to let us know which activities you'd like to be helping with by checking them off on the Member Information form.

—by Ollie Hamlin

President's Message

With Sesquicentennial celebrations winding down, we now need to concentrate on other activities of the Society.

Your officers have been spending a good deal of time attending meetings regarding Plaza Park improvements and restoration of the Historic Buildings on Plaza Way. Architects' sketches of the proposed improvements are shown in the LHS display case on the outside west end of the Lafayette Lucky store. Please visit the display and communicate to the Society any suggestions and comments.

Work is progressing slowly on the proposed Lafayette Historical Museum. We have work space in the EDC Computer store on Golden Gate Way which makes it possible to gather and catalog artifacts that are important to Lafayette's history. We again urge you to contact us regarding items you possess which could be added to our growing collection of artifacts and memorabilia. We have a continuing need for volunteers to aid us in the collection and cataloging process.

We appreciate your support of the Society and hope that you will find time to take an active role in one or more of our many activities. Please contact any of the Directors and Committee Chairs for suggestions on how you may be of help.

—by Bill Somerton

Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Scheduled for Tuesday, May 11, 1999

Mark your calendar now for LHS's annual pot luck dinner meeting, scheduled as usual for the second Tuesday in May, the 11th. Full details of the evening's program will be in the next newsletter.

List of Pioneer Descendants Takes Shape

You probably read in the last Newsletter that LHS is compiling a list of people descended from Pioneer families in Lafayette. Nancy Flood has started the list, and we've decided to publish it in this issue in hopes that members will think of some-

one who's missing, and add valuable names and addresses to the list. Note that we're not publishing street addresses and phone numbers out of respect for privacy, but have noted where we don't have that information. If you know of someone you think should be on this list, or have address or phone number information in cases where we are missing it, please call Nancy Flood at 283-3409.

Brown, Robert W.
Glendale, Oregon 97442
Family Relationship: Brown
Other Information: Son of Kenneth Brown

Brown, Susie
Salinas, Ca. 93908
(Need phone number)
Family Relationship: Brown?
Other Information: Ray Peters contacted, no reply (1998)

Callahan, Christine
Concord, Ca.
(Need address and phone number)
Family Relationship: Brown-direct from Margeline
Other Information:

Chittick, Betty Hamilton (S.E. Chittick)
Portland, Oregon 97206
Family Relationship: Brown
Other Information: Sybil Brown Wilkinson's daughter

Elliott, Tom and Gail
Pittsburg, Ca. 94565
Family Relationship: Brown
Other Information: Tom's Grandmother, Sybil Brown Wilkinson

Flanders, Mary Powell
Oakland, Ca. 94618
Family Relationship: Powell
Other Information:

Flood, Nancy J.
Lafayette, Ca. 94549
Family Relationship: Flood/Lamp
Other Information: Daughter of Earl Flood

Gallagher, Genevieve
Antioch, Ca. 94509
Family Relationship: Flood/Lamp
Other Information: Daughter of Alexander Flood

Hamlin, Oliver and Virgina
Lafayette, Ca. 94549
Family Relationship: Hamlin
Other Information: LHS board member

Hodges, Frank
Fremont, Ca. 94536
(Need phone number)
Family Relationship: Hodges?
Other Information: may have attended Wayside Inn dedication

Hough, Prof. Granville W.
Laguna Hills, Ca. 92653-2830
(Need phone number)
Family Relationship: Hough?
Other Information: Wrote for info. March, 1998

Hunt, Harold and Dorothy
Lafayette, Ca. 94549
Family Relationship: Hunt
Other Information: Harold's aunt ran ice cream shop

Laird, Larraine
Pacheco, Ca.
(Need address and phone number)
Family Relationship: Dewing grandaughter
Other Information:

Mckeegan, Col. Rothery and Jean
San Antonio, Texas 78209
(Need phone number)
Family Relationship: Flood
Other Information: Grandmother, Lizzy Flood Medau (Rothery)

Monlux, Edith
Chico, Ca. 95928
Family Relationship: Dewing grandaughter
Other Information:

Stewart, Joyce Allen
Walnut Creek, Ca. 94598
Family Relationship: Allen
Other Information: Daughter of George Allen

Swanson, Laura Ann
Idyllwild, Ca. 92549
Family Relationship: Brown
Other Information: Grandmother, Sybil Brown Wilkinson

Wakeman, Bill
Lafayette, Ca. 94549
Family Relationship: Wakeman
Other Information: LHS original Historian

Railroad Signs On Lafayette Trail Vandalized Again

Since 1991 Lafayette Historical Society has installed and maintained 5 railroad signs along the former right of way of the Sacramento Northern Railroad, now known as "The Trail". Each sign marks the location of a former flag stop within Lafayette. Several of the signs have been vandalized over the years, then replaced or repaired by LHS volunteers. Currently the sign at W. Lafayette near Stanley School is missing, and the Glenside sign has been broken. LHS is considering using a stronger material than the wooden 2 x 4's to make them more durable

The 5 stations are identified as W. Lafayette, Lafayette, Raliez, Glenside and Burton. Each sign post bears its flag stop's name, and a brief explanation. For instance, at the Raliez stop the inscription reads:

Location of Raliez Flag Stop, SACRAMENTO NORTHERN RR. Passenger trains from Oakland stopped here 1913-1941. Freight trains ran until 1957. Lafayette Historical Society, 1991.

The signs were installed as a community service by the LHS to remind us of our historic past.

—by Ollie Hamlin

Board of Directors Actions

November 10, 1998 meeting—

Discussed the LHS Museum Workshop's lack of access outside of EDC Computers' business hours. Voted to obtain a bid for installation of an outside door into the space.

Discussed renovation of Plaza Park, providing for its enlargement and redesign, and possible renovation of the storefronts facing the park along Golden Gate Way.

Voted unanimously to commend the Sesquicentennial Committee on its very successful yearlong celebration of Lafayette's founding 150 years ago.

January 12, 1999 meeting—

Discussed a collection of letters and other papers from Carrie Van Meter, Lafayette's Postmistress in the early 1900's, which may be contributed to the Society's archives. The letters were salvaged from the spoils of demolishing the Van Meter house in preparation for construction of the Safeway store in Lafayette.

Discussed the evolving plans for renovation of Plaza Park, financing of which could include Measure C money and a fund-raising drive. Bill Somerton and Marechal Duncan have been monitoring the proceedings closely. Be sure to see Bill Somerton's display of architects' sketches of the project at the Lucky Store display case.

Noted that the Lafayette School District has donated the dedication plaque from the old Vallecito School (recently sold to Bentley School) to the Society for its archives.

—by Gary Willcuts

Tall Ships Celebrate Sesqui

In 1849 when gold was discovered in the Sierra foothills the quickest route West was by clipper ships with names like Rainbow, Comet and Flying Cloud. These ships carried a rag-tag collection of prospectors and dreamers and most of the supplies these hardy adventurers needed to help support their dream.

Now, 150 years later, California returns to its roots to celebrate its history, people and industries. In July 1999, an international fleet of tall ships, many like the ones that brought the early Californians to San Francisco, will sail through the Golden Gate for the greatest maritime event the West Coast of the United States has ever seen.

The gathering of tall ships will be available dockside for public display from July 2-5, 1999. The ships will then line up off the Marin headlands for the beginning of the Mervyn's California Gold Rush Race to Los Angeles/Long Beach.

To date there are more than 50 tall ships slated to attend the celebration on the Bay. Spectacular vessels that include the U.S. Coast Guard training ship Eagle as well as Japan's Merchant Marine training ship The Kaiwo Maru. This celebration will require the help and participation of many volunteers. . For information on how you can participate call Paul Sheehan at (510) 654-1071.

—by Paul Sheehan

1997/98 Board of Directors and Committee Chairs

Board of Directors

Bill Somerton, President	284-9785
Nancy Flood, Vice President	283-3409
Paul Sheehan, Treasurer	284-1287
Ruth Dyer, Recording Secretary	283-8312
Oliver Hamlin, Corresponding Secretary	283-6822
Keith Blakeney	284-2221
Marechal Duncan	283-6812
Ray Peters	283-5256
Tom & Janice Crosetti Titmus	299-2030
Joseph Van Overveen	283-3650
Bill Wakeman	283-3908
Gary Willcuts	283-0706

Committee Chairs

Annual Potluck Dinner, Richard Johnson	283-0199
Archives, (vacant)	
Book Sales, Ruth Dyer	283-8312
Community Relations, Marechal Duncan	283-6812
Displays, Bill Somerton	284-9785
Fire Engine, George Wasson	284-4603
Historian, Bill Wakeman	283-3908
LHS Online, Dorothy Walker	283-3303
Membership, Oliver Hamlin	284-1446
Newsletter, Gary Willcuts	283-0706
Mailing, James Sturman	932-7620
Oral Historian, Nancy Flood	283-3409
Plaza Park, Ray Peters	283-5256
Programs, Keith Blakeney	284-2221
Publicity, Tom & Janice Crosetti Titmus	299-2030
Walking Tours, Bill Wakeman	283-3908

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Lafayette Historical Society

MEMBER INFORMATION

(For multiple names/addresses, please photocopy this form.)

Name: _____ Spouse: _____

Address: _____ City/State/Zip _____

Home Phone: _____ Daytime phone: _____

Membership Categories and annual dues (please check one):

_____ Student membership	$ 2.50
_____ Family membership	$ 10.00
_____ Business membership	$ 50.00
_____ Life membership	$100.00

Make check payable to **Lafayette Historical Society** and mail to P.O. Box 133, Lafayette, California 94549

DUES	$_____
Fire engine maintenance	$_____
Sesquicentennial	$_____
TOTAL ENCLOSED	$_____

Please indicate your areas of special interest:

_____ Sesquicentennial

_____ Annual Dinner Committee	_____ Archives	_____ LHS Online/Computers
_____ Displays	_____ Fire Engine	_____ Landmarks
_____ Newpaper Clippings	_____ Oral History	_____ Photograph Collection
_____ Programs & Trips	_____ Research	_____ Telephone Committee
_____ Walking Tours	_____ Other _____	

LHS CALENDAR

LHS Board of Directors Meeting—Open to All Members

Date	Tuesday, March 9, 1999
Time	7:30 pm
Place	Home of Marechal Duncan, 3552 Silver Springs Rd., Lafayette

Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Dinner

Date	Tuesday, May 11, 1999
Time & Place	To be announced

For information on membership, contact Oliver Hamlin, 283-6822.

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First Class Mail

Return Service Requested